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SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, DRL/AWH AND DRL/IRF

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TAGS: [PHUM KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: UBCV PATRIARCH'S FUNERAL HELD SUCCESSFULLY

REF: A) HCMC 619 B) HCMC 608 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) Summary. July 11 funeral observances organized by the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) for their deceased patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, proceeded without incident, albeit amid tight security. The funeral was attended by representatives of both the UBCV and the government-recognized Vietnam Buddhist Sanga (VBS) as well as by many others, including the press. UBCV contacts said that condolence wreaths sent by international press and other supporters were on display. The Patriarch's successor will likely be named on the traditional Buddhist 49-day death anniversary. End Summary.

UBCV, VBS, Police and Press All in Attendance

¶2. (SBU) UBCV Monk Thich Chon Tam told post that the three-hour funeral for former UBCV Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang proceeded as planned on July 11th and the event "went smoothly." In addition to senior UBCV monks, the head of the HCMC VBS Executive Council, Venerable Thich Tri Quang, as well as many other VBS monks from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, also attended the ceremony. UBCV monk Thich Khong Tanh said many VBS monks came to pay respects to the Most Venerable as "he was their teacher as well."

¶3. (SBU) Plainclothes policemen were posted inside and outside Nguyen Thieu monastery and some monks from the provinces recognized policemen present from their localities. Several provincial monks previously prevented from traveling (ref A) reported they managed to make it to Binh Dinh in time for the funeral after all and UBCV contacts said the authorities "did not do anything to openly prevent the ceremony." Despite the broad turn out, rivalries persisted; UBCV monk Thich Khong Tanh reported that UBCV leaders closed ranks around the coffin in order to prevent non-UBCV members from "squeezing in."

¶4. (SBU) UBCV contacts also noted that many reporters were present and that condolence wreaths sent from Radio Free Asia, members of the Buddhist community in the U.S. and Bloc 8406 were displayed. UBCV monks said some "disguised men" snuck into the monastery to steal the wreaths, but were caught and thrown out.

GVN Vowed Not to Interfere

¶5. (SBU) At a July 10 press conference, MFA Spokesperson Le Dung rejected Human Rights Watch's claims that the GVN had interfered with Quang's funeral, noting that "as a citizen and a Buddhist follower," senior UBCV monk Thich Quang Do is "within his rights" to attend. Le Dung also reiterated the GVN's position that the UBCV is not an officially recognized organization. Consistent with the GVN's stated policy of non-interference, Post received approval for an officer to attend the funeral from the HCMC External Relations Office (ERO--the local office of the MFA) late in the afternoon on July 10. (Note: Officers stationed at ConGen HCMC are required to file a DipNote five work days

prior to provincial travel, but the ERO approved this request in just over 24 hours.) Unfortunately, it was logistically impossible for an officer to make the trip to Binh Dinh at that point. Even if the GVN had approved the travel almost immediately, flights from HCMC to Binh Dinh were already fully booked.

Next Steps for the UBCV

¶6. (SBU) Senior UBCV monks did take a moment prior to the funeral to kneel before Quang's coffin and pledge to fulfill the former Patriarch's wishes to restore the UBCV to the same level of popularity the organization had before 1975. Post is expecting the announcement of the Fifth Patriarch to take place during observances marking the traditional Buddhist 49-day death anniversary for Quang in August.

¶7. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.

FAIRFAX